ROLE OF DR. KĀMESHWARA SINGH IN THE FIELD OF INDIAN JOURNALISM

By

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Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh, Mahārājadhirāj of Darbhanga, was a born leader. He had invigorating ideas ; he could provide inspiring leadership ; he impressed those with whom he came in contact. He was sweet and soft ; he was gentle and tolerant ; he was firm and positive in his conviction.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh was an activist thinker and philosopher in the field of journalism. He founded "The Indian Nation" in 1930, an English daily of Patna. He started "The Āryāvarta", a Hindi daily of Patna, in 1940. He also revived the Mithilā Mihira, a Maithilī Weekly, in 1960. He wanted that "The Indian Nation" should grow as a State newspaper, laying emphasis on the full growth of Bihar. He never wanted to utilise "The Indian Nation" for the ascendancy of his political leadership. He was not drawn towards power politics. He hated some of the techniques, necessary for the nursing of power politics. He loved the State of Bihar, and he thought that he could serve the State well if he could conduct a good daily which could function as the spokesman of modern Bihar.

Modern politics has two facets, viz. (1) seizure of power, and (2) service of people. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh was drawn towards the exciting adventure of serving people. Those who are deeply engaged in maping out the strategic moves for the seizure of power, elbowing out their critics from positions of vantage and authority, did not attract him. He had admiration for thinkers, fighters and crusaders ; he had no respect for clever and cunning people who knew the art of succeeding in life at thc cost of others. He wanted that "The Indian Nation" would do justice to the principles which guided him in the evolution of his political concepts.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh showed his adherence to certain positive and creative postulates. First, he believed in a stable order of society. There must be orderly growth and peaceful changes. He did not like to shut the door against experiments and innovations, but he was opposed

to violent upheavals. Secondly, he was very much against uncleanliness in public life. He believed that the country could not grow to its full height if the public men had not observed a high code of conduct in public life. The general deterioration in the standards of public life hurt him most. Thirdly, the frowned on politicians who had small minds and preferred the short-cut to positions of authority through unrighteous ways. He expected that they should believe neatly and function on socially desirable lines. These were the major premises which influenced his concept of the role of a newspaper in renascent India. In fact, they formed the basic policies of the newspapers which he had started. It was his positive direction that "The Indian Nation" should not indulge in the politics of mud-slinging. It should give form and shape to the urges and aspirations of people. It had to function fearlessly. It was not to be shaken, in its service, by any threat. It would serve the cause which it would hold dear without fear or favour. Comments should be sharp and sober. Any unbalanced judgment was no judgment at all. That was what the Mahārājadhirāja Bahādura of Darbhanga, Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh, had often stressed and stated. He was particular that his newspapers would accept no prompting and no directive from any quarter, friendly or hostile. They must work with courage and conviction on independent lines. Independence, in the view of Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh, had four aspects : viz, (1) newspapers must be fair and impartial in their views and news ; (2) there should be no deviation from the path of service to the country and they should not be entangled in commitments to any group or political party ; (3) newspapers must stand up and fight for causes and principles which they prize most ; (4) newspapers must co-ordinate their independence to the lure of vulgar politics.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh made signifiant contribution in the field of Indian journalism. He guarded the policy of journalism through the medium of his newspapers and allowed nothing to come in between for corrupting of his newspapers. He stood determined to safeguard the independence of his newspapers. He never allowed his newspapers to be hawkers of sectarian trends in society and fissiparous tendencies in the country. He desired that his newspapers should work continuously and ceaselessly for harmonised synthetised growth of the country. He did not accept the contention that the political action could solve all problems. He could not, therefore, accept the dominence of power-loving politicians in the arena of social progress and national reconstruction. He interpreted social security, social justice and social progress not with

a political angle. He wanted that his newspapers should stand for the harmonious and national synthesis between individual liberty and social good. The "Indian Nation" had scrupulously tried to carry aloft the banner of the faith and conviction of Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh was a man of ideas. He was shy in his nature but very firm in his conviction. He was a "gentleman"; he hated the technique of aggression in selling his point of view. But he loved to place his point of view before the public. He was a landed magnate, but there was no feudalism in his political approach. He never wanted to dictate his scheme of reforms.

In politics, Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh advocated the liberal outlook and approach. He did not believe that the last word could be said in politics and that the last page could be written in the history of any country. The growth is ceaseless, and the process is continuous. Hence, he hated dogmas in politics and slogans in the political agitation. He did not find much merit in the politics of agitation. He was fascinated by the politics of reconstruction. But he defended the right of an individual to carve out his own path. During British rule he gave support to the Congress cause, because he wanted the country to grow and blossom in fulness. He looked around, with sympathy, to congress critics like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, because he had special fascination for courageous and independent thinking. In subject India, he showed his adherence to the Liberal Party, as he had faith in the harmonised and synthetised progress of the country. The path of conflict did not appeal to him. He never failed to acknowledge the progressive forces released by the British Government, and as such he had his support for the enlightened aspects of British rule. He did not want India to move away from the moorings of its past culture. He had no respect for traditions which had no merit save their age, [illegible] he was one of the promoters of cultural renaissance and reformatio[illegible] India. He was conservative in the sense that his mission was not [illegible]k but to reconstruct. But he was revolutionary in his outlook, as [illegible]ed s[illegible]adfastly for industrial revolution, for scientific progress an[illegible]w va[illegible]s in the context of new social changes.

In [illegible], D[illegible]me[illegible]wara Singh was very much misunderstood. He pref[illegible]ive [illegible] shell, as he hated the glare of publicity. He ha[illegible]e ap[illegible]h[illegible] anything crude and vulgar shocked him. He [illegible] w[illegible]b[illegible]od and beautiful. Petty and prejudiced [illegible]eal [illegible]m[illegible] looked down upon small men with small [illegible]e [illegible]urt and prick others, he was never rude [illegible]s in the company of small-minded peo-

ple. He had contempt for men with black faces and black minds. He loved to be in the company of those who could act correctly, think deeply and feel nobly. True, he tolerated the second-rate people, but his weakness and fascination were for the first-rate people. He was helpful to many in whom he found merit. Many people had disappointed him but he did not lose faith in good men. He was anxious to convey his appreciation to the trained, the skilled, the efficient and the courageous people.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh could not be a party politician. He was a stranger to the art and science of compromise with all that was sordid, vulgar and vicious. He loved the country much better than any political party. He did not join the Congress Party, but he was all out for the sustenance of Congress rule which was necessary for the unfolding of India's destiny. He was fully conscious of the blemishes of the Congress Government. But in his analysis, the Congress Party was ideally suitable for the consolidation of the country. True, he was critical of the Congress programme of abolition of the landlord-tenant system and of the Congress strategy of thoughtless extension of the regulatory powers of Government, but he realised the necessity of stable Government in free India which could be provided by the Congress Party. The Gandhian outlook and approach attracted Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh ; Sardar Patel's historic work of consolidation through peaceful integration of Princely States with the Union of India thrilled him, and Mr. Nehru's success in raising the international status of India made him proud. But he also looked kindly to honest and constructive critics of the Government.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh developed a political philosophy of his own. The salient features of his political thought may be noted. First, he believed in a liberal democracy. Truth can be known when the two sides of the case are presented. Every wall has two sides. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh never believed in a one-eyed approach. Secondly, he accepted the tenets of parliamentary democracy. Rival opinions and rival parties have to be tolerated. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh gave his full support to the Congress Government, but he was anxious that the Opposition Parties should be strong and effective. He had no good words for irresponsible Opposition. He knew that no ruling party could nurse democratic forces unless it had to contend with the Opposition point of view. Different ideologies and differing systems must struggle for recognition, so that a new synthesis may be forged. Thirdly, Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh was very much against the concept of a Party State. The ruling party has to govern the country impartially and impersonally. It is not to be dictated by the organisational machinery. He believed with Professor Laski that

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In my view, Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh was very much misunderstood. He preferred to live in his own shell, as he hated the glare of publicity. He had a sensitive approach, and anything crude and vulgar shocked him. He loved all that was noble, good and beautiful. Petty and prejudiced men did not appeal to him. He looked down upon small men with small minds. But as he chose not to hurt and prick others, he was never rude to any one. He was never serious in the company of small-minded peo-

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half of the tragedies of the world were due to the fact that the ruling group thought that it was infallible. This doctrine of infallibility cannot co-exist with a liberal democracy. Regimented thinking is bad, and the lack of respect for the Opposition point of view is worse. Parliamentary democracy cannot yield rich dividends if the Opposition party is not effective and responsible. Fourthly, in the dynamics of social reconstruction, the Government have to be receptive and responsive to new ideas, to new urges and aspirations. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh wanted experimental attitudes. He had no taste for a closed mind, a closed philosophy. He accepted the position that men, in the ultimate analysis, were influenced more by their tastes than by logic. But he never wanted to obstruct the flow of criticisms, based on rational reasoning and analysis.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh developed a code of his own in the conducting of newspapers. First, he frowned on unbalanced writings in the Press. He wanted Editors to be impartial and sober. When he asked for objectivity in news presentation, he did not meen that news-writers could be absolutely detached. In the laboratory of social affairs, no person can remain fully detached. He knew that every person developed his own point of view under the impact of environmental and family training. As he believed in the liberal philosophy of tolerance and synthetised growth, he wanted the Editor and the newsmen to follow the liberal technique in the presentation of news and views. Nothing should be suppressed but nothing illiberal should be encouraged. There may be news which seeks to promote the politics of strife and chaos. It should not be given undue importance. There may be happenings which are not socially desirable, and they are not to be dramatised. There may be developments which obstruct the nursing of democratic forces in society, and they should not be approvingly presented. In short, Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh stood for creative objectivity in the presentation of news. Thus, sensationalism, overdramatisation, exaggeration, the emphasis on illiberal and undemocratic ethos, the accent on the promotion of imbalance and instability in society, all these should be scrupulously avoided. News is sacred, so long as it helps the liberal and progressive urges in society. As Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh stood for changes by consent and not by force, he disfavoured the techniques and patterns, hostile to and subversive of the democratic processes.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh did not want newspepers to be crude and vulgar. He accepted the basic proposition that newpapers of today had to be placed in the category of heavy industries. But he was keenly particular about the public service aspect of the newspaper. In the race for

profits, he would refuse to subordinate the public serviee aspect of the modern newspaper. The Press can educate, entertain, widen the vision of its readers; it can broaden the base of democracy and can impart vigour and stability to the useful institutions in society. It can also break and pull down the existing structures in society and increase conflicts, tensions and antogonisms in society. Men and women have tigerish instincts; they have also the instincts of service and fellowship. In his view, the function of the newspaper is to curb the brute in man and to promote the socially destrable emotions in men. The newspaper has an industrial base; it has to command effective circulation. But its commercial instinct cannot change the social service role of a newspaper. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh hated the technique of profit at any cost. He looked upon his newspaper industry as a vehicle of service to the country. The decline in newspaper profits had never disturbed him, but he was visibly shaken with the decline in the reputation of his newspapers. He felt that everything was lost with the sagging of the reputation of his newspapers. He would ask his newspapers not to lure reader but to serve them. The concept of service may differ. But he adhered to his own concept of service. He prized stability and mobility. The soeial order must be stable : it should respond to new urges and aspirations also. He had no faith in any social philosophy which would disrupt stability and mobility.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh, as the newspaper proprietor, had a purposeful concept of the freedom of the Press. He wanted his newspapers to function on independent lines. In his analysis, free Press must have three facets, viz, (1) it must have a critical tone, offering constructive criticisms to the Government ; (2) it must not be the captive of any political party ; (3) it must function on the planes of sobriety, impartiality and fairness. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh did not try to adverties his personal views through his newspapers. He stood for certain ideals. He wanted to be helpful to the Congress Government. And he wanted to keep the Congress Party on the right track. It was not true that he had instinctive allegiance to every syllable of the Congress programme. He had his differences. But he felt that Congress rule could shape the destiny of India. Hence, his newspapers gave support to the Congress experiment. But he knew that history would not pardon Congress lapses. He, therefore, wanted that his newspapers would keep a close watch on Congress irregularities. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh had instinctive aversion to irregularities. Thus, he liked the critical and the constructive role of a newspaper. Criticisms must not be negative; they are to be purposive, and appreciative observations must be analytical and logical. He wanted that his newspapers

should argue and state their case. They must not make sweeping and hasty generalisations Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh had no love for newspaper writings which bore marks of hurried thinking and impatient approach. Newspapers should go slow, but they should be consistent and persistent in the presentation of their views. There should be no politics of pride and prejudice in the writings of newspapers. In short, newspaper writers are not to be loud hawkers or interested brokers; they are to write impersonally, argue rationally and state boldly. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh had always good words for bold writings, brave convictions and constructive suggetions.

What he detested was this that there should be no personal praise or personal abuse. In criticisms, personal abuses should be discardad, and in appreciative writings, personal praise should be avoided. The code of conduct in the public life of the country has to be high. And newspapers are concerned with the public life of the country. Any propaganda on a personal level is against the code of conduct for the Press. Every profession has to adhere to its own code of conduct. In a free society, free Press is essential. The Press can be free, when it refuses to accept the promptings of the Excutive or of the political parties or of any vested interest. Every newspaper has its own policy, but the policy is to be pursued in an enlightened way. It must not bow down to outside pressures. As the proprietor of newspapers, he believed in the free functioning of the Editor and his department within the framework of its general policies. He hated regimented thinking; accordingly, he refused to impose his thinking on the Editor. He was only particular that the Editor should not deviate from the path of sobriety and impartiality in the thoughtful pursuit of the policies of the newspaper. Sobriety pays in the long run; impartiality strengthens the case which the Editor upholds; fairness consists in the sympathetic understanding of the other point of view. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh allowed his Editor to develop his own grammar and syntax in the presentation of the case. He knew that the Editor was a literary artist, not to be dictated in the use of his brush and pen. He even permitted deviationism to a certain extent. What he wanted was this that the core of the policy of the newspaper should be conformed to. Thus, the Editor had the abundance of freedom under the stewardship of the enlightened proprietor like Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh. In sum Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh gave much scope for the development of the personality of the Editor. Accordingly, the complaint that newspaper proprietors choose to drill and discipline Editors in their writings was

eloquently absent in the newspapers which he founded and conducted with superb craftsmanship.

Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh was an ideal newspaper proprietor. It was his basic stand that the newspaper should be utilised as the instrument of service to people. It should sustain and nourish the ideals of progress. The newspaper is not to serve the sordid ends of personal publicity or aggrandisement. It is not to wage the battle on behalf of any group or sect. It must serve the national interest. There are several roads to the service of people. Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh chose his own road. But once the road is carved out, he would not allow his newspapers to accept defeat. He gave "a soul" to his newspapers and a mission to strive for. "The Indian Nation" could develop its personality under the fostering guidance of Dr. Kāmeshwara Singh.
